

Golden Interstar DVB-T/S 8300 CI Premium Digital and Terrestrial - Plus Spectrum Analyzer!

Digital satellite TV has already found its way into over a million homes in Europe while the changeover of terrestrial TV from analog to digital in many of the old world countries is taking its time. If you are interested in both of these methods then you definitely should not skip over this test report.

The DVB-T/S 8300 CI Premium is one of the newest receivers to come out of the German manufacturer Golden Interstar and its list of features promise quite a lot: two tuners - one for digital satellite reception and the other for digital terrestrial signals - enough memory for up to 6000 channels on as many as 1000 transponders, every DiSEqC protocol plus USALS and to top it off a two-year warranty.

And this is just what is printed on the receiver's box leaving you with the idea that this is a technologically advanced and reliable product. We took a closer look at the 8300 CI Premium to see if it could deliver everything as promised.

The design of the box is simple yet elegant. Two thirds of the front is enclosed in

a dark-colored glass panel behind which can be found the four-digit display and the infra-red receiver for the remote control. Alongside are the buttons for channel selection, volume control and on/standby arranged in a half circle.

To the right is a flap under which can be found two SmartCard slots as well as slots for two CAM modules making this receiver compatible with the reception of PayTV signals.

A Menu button and an OK button are also to be found behind this flap. Together with





the channel up/down buttons and the volume control buttons, all of the system settings for this box can be handled directly from the front panel.

This is an intelligent solution for those moments when you discover that the remote control needs a new set of batteries. It is unfortunate that the manufacturer didn't think to include an Exit button as well; it's easy enough to get into all the menus but getting out is a little bit more involved.

Looking at the rear panel you will find an input for the satellite antenna, an input for digital terrestrial signals plus one for standard terrestrial channels.

All of these three inputs also have corresponding looped-through outputs with the standard terrestrial output connected to a modulator. In addition to the two Scart connectors for a TV and VCR, there's also a set of three RCA jacks that provide composite video and stereo audio outputs plus there's extra connectors for a 0/12-volt programmable output and an S/PDIF output for digital audio.

The remote control is not too big and not too small and is light and easy to use. We would have preferred to see the volume controls set apart from the ring buttons so that the ring buttons could be used for other commands, but this is really our own impression and doesn't in any way take away from the overall ergonomics of the remote control.

Everyday Use

After turning on the receiver for the first time or after the box is reset to its default settings, the main menu will first appear in English. The submenu „Installation“ is already highlighted. For less experienced users it might have made more sense to make the menu language selection the first step before doing anything else.

These settings are only first found in the third submenu. The available languages are English, French, German, Arabic, Persian, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Czech, Greek, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarian and Italian even though the printed user manual indicates that only eight languages are available.

In the installation you must first choose between satellite and terrestrial. In satellite mode a list of all the preprogrammed satellite positions is displayed on the left side of the screen.

The 8300 CI Premium has 83 of these positions with additional positions that can be added manually. All of the current settings for the selected satellite are shown in a window on the right side. Here you can not only select the local oscillator frequency (LOF), the DiSEqC settings or activate a Network scan, but you can also view the signal strength and quality in a spectrum analyzer display for every transponder from the selected satellite.

This feature is extremely helpful when precisely aligning the antenna since in spectrum analyzer mode the signal strength and quality is displayed as two moving lines of different colors. What resembles the lines on a medical chart help to precisely map signal changes as the result of moving the antenna. The supreme advantage to this type of display is that instead of having just a display of the signal conditions at that moment, the overall results of moving the antenna around can be seen at the same time making it easier to interpret and ultimately correct the alignment.

Should a DiSEqC motor also be connected, these settings can also be taken care of in this menu. In the Transponder Settings submenu, transponders can be edited, added or individually scanned. The manual entry of PID data is also possible here. All in all,

nothing appears to have been left out in the channel scan settings. After selecting a desired satellite, a channel scan can be started by simply pressing the blue button on the remote control.

In addition to a progress bar graph, Golden Interstar was confident enough to also include an elapsed time indicator (minutes and seconds) for the channel scan. 75 Astra transponders were scanned in just 3 minutes and 26 seconds. An incredible achievement considering that we activated the Network scan and searched for all available channels!

The scan of terrestrial channels follows a similar path. It can be an automatic scan for all available digital channels in Europe or a manual scan on a particular channel frequency. The Astra position alone delivers over 1000 TV and radio channels. If reception is expanded to multiple satellites, the number of channels will, of course, increase dramatically. Naturally some form of organization of all these channels is necessary. For starters, channels can be individually moved into one of the eight Favorites lists.

In many cases this is where the user-friendliness typically comes to an end. What good is a high-speed channel scan and lots of channel memory when it will take you an entire weekend just to sort through all the channels and move them into appropriate Favorites lists?

Fortunately, the 8300 CI Premium did not disappoint us here. In the Channel Editing submenu we find a two-column display with the entire channel list on the left side and the Favorites list on the right side. Simply select the desired channel and push the OK button to move the channel over to the Favorites list. It doesn't get easier than this.

Golden Interstar suggests that its channel switching time is extremely fast. In practice,

nearly a full second was needed from the time a new channel is selected to the point where it actually appears on the screen. Within the same transponder this time is somewhat faster and when switching over to an encrypted channel you actually need to wait a little longer. This is nothing to write home about but at the same time it is nothing to complain about either.

The waiting time can be indirectly shortened by selecting the fading option in the user settings menu. This will let the old channel fade out and the new channel fade in - something that is quite pleasant to the eyes.

The menus are clearly laid out and permit quick and easy navigation to the individual submenus. The overall design, with its background colors and outlines, is a very pleasant experience and all of the functions in the 8300 CI Premium can be found where they would normally be expected.

The Info bar that appears for a user-defined number of seconds when switching to another channel or when the Info button is pushed on the remote, displays the chan-

nel number and name as well as the satellite with transponder frequency and symbols for FTA/CAS, teletext, audio options and parental controls.

The signal strength can be displayed either in bar graph form or in spectrum analyzer form. Unfortunately, the title of the current program is not automatically displayed. This only appears with an additional push of the Info button.

It seems that it has become a prerequisite for a receiver to come with a variety of video games to pass the time during long commercial breaks. This is no different with the 8300

CI Premium. There's even a Zoom function to let you enlarge portions of the video image. Even this tool is becoming available in more and more receivers even though the actual usefulness of this feature still remains to be seen.

A good Electronic Program Guide (EPG) is much more important. A push of the EPG button on the remote displays a seven-day preview of the current channel. The directional buttons can be used to change channels and also select the preview day. The EPG is designed with clarity and loads the data reasonably fast and then reliably displays this information.

Expert conclusion



A solid and good-looking receiver for satellite and terrestrial reception. Fast software and excellent options for aligning a satellite antenna manually or with a DiSEqC motor. Let's not forget the turbo-charged channel scan.



The OSD design is for our tastes a little bit too colorful.



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Golden Interstar DVB-T/S 8300 CI Premium

Digital FTA+CI satellite and terrestrial receiver

TECHNICAL DATA



Distributor	Golden Interstar GmbH Stuttgarter Str. 36, 73635 Rudersberg, Germany
Fax	+49 7183 30594 20
Email	info@golden-interstar.com
Internet	www.golden-interstar.com
Model	DVB-T/S 8300 CI Premium
Function	Digital FTA + CI satellite and terrestrial receiver
Channel memory	6000
Satellites	83 pre-programmed
Symbol rate	1 ~ 45 Ms/sec
DiSEqC	1.0 / 1.1 / 1.2
USALS	Yes
Programmable	0/12 V Yes
Digital Audio Output	S/PDIF (optical)
Scart connectors	2
Video/Stereo Audio Output	3 x RCA
Colour system	PAL, NTSC
S-VHS Output	No
Modulator	Yes
SCPC compatible	Yes
EPG	Yes
Teletext	Yes (OSD und VBI, only OSD available in test)
Power Supply	100 –250 VAC
Power Consumption	25 W max.

TEST RESULT SATELLITE INTERNATIONAL TELE	Features	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Channel Memory	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Channel Scan Speed	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Channel Switching Speed	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Video Quality	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Audio Quality	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
	Tuner Sensitivity	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y



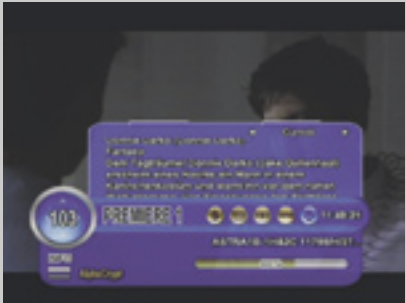
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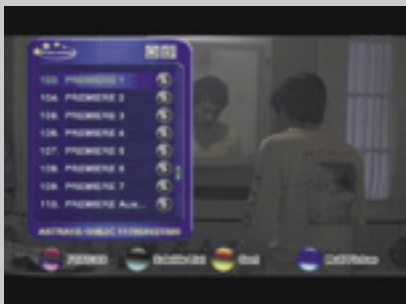
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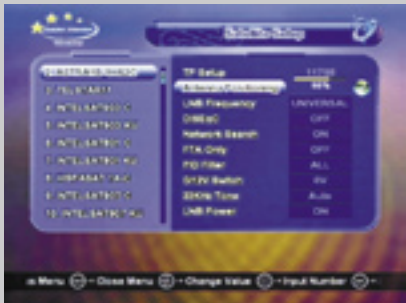
EPG



Info



Channel list



Satellite setup